

COUNTY OF SONOMA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

575 ADMINISTRATION DRIVE, RM. 100A
SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA 95403

(707) 565-2241
FAX (707) 565-3778



MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

SHIRLEE ZANE
CHAIR

JAMES GORE
VICE CHAIR

SUSAN GORIN

DAVID RABBITT

LYNDA HOPKINS

December 5, 2017

Ms. Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) – Proceeding 15-91
Via FCC Electronic Comment Filing System

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On behalf of the County of Sonoma, I am writing to request the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) support for expedited and critical improvements to the Wireless Emergency Alert System (WEA) to improve public safety for our community.

Sonoma County currently relies on a system called SoCoAlert to share emergency notifications. This system includes contact information from subscribers who "opt-in," numbers purchased from landline providers through the 911 system, and sources such as White Pages. It allows for precise geo-targeting, optimizing the delivery of critical information such as evacuation notices.

The WEA system has superior ability to reach people on their mobile devices due to not requiring a proactive "opt-in." However, improvements to WEA have yet to be enacted by the FCC and wireless carriers to render the system more practical for our geographically diverse County. Flash floods, fires and other hazards often impact a small subset of our county's population and we need to be able to utilize WEA to alert only those who may be impacted to avoid the negative consequences of over-alerting people who are not the intended audience.

Sonoma County urges the FCC to vote to create an emergency alert system that, by May 2019 at the latest, will require wireless carriers to support geo-targeting within one-tenth of a mile, increase character limits, and incorporate web links into WEA messages. These changes are necessary to make this tool useful for life-saving emergency notifications in geographically diverse urban and rural areas.

Thank you for your sense of urgency in solving this problem and for voting to enact necessary rule changes.

Sincerely,

SHIRLEE ZANE, Chair
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors